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## THE STANDARDIZATION OF FAMILY LIFE

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In the early history of America the dress, the habits, the morality, the relations between men and women could be predicted with certainty. In a home it was known both what to expect and what to do in return. This uniformity has been broken up by recent industrial changes through which the working population has been transferred from the farm to shops and factories. City life makes new demands and excites new wants. When old types of social control break down an epoch of confusion ensues; but human nature, or better said, social nature, at length asserts itself. A new uniformity arises which is expressed in standards that impose themselves on men through the advantage routine gives. They save themselves a thousand worries when it is known what is expected and what in turn others have a right to demand.

In this earlier country life the model wife was a good cook. Men gained in reputation by saving. Town life has so changed the conditions under which families thrive that these older virtues have lost their prominence. The high cost of food has made its economy of more consequence than its variety. A cleanly kitchen is now of more importance than the variety of preserves on its shelves. Women think of each other not in terms of their housekeeping virtues, but in those of dress and manners. Industrial occupations give to women an opportunity for skill and efficiency which is denied them in the interior of a two-story house. Dress, amusement and street activity create the forces that hold together the families thus environed. The family savings are collected in saving banks to be loaned out in large blocks to a distant railroad. A new transcontinental line may add something to the welfare of eastern workmen, but the addition is too small and the effect too indirect to make any perceptible difference in the incomes or standards of those who save. The only element in saving that can be visualized is life insurance, but even this end has

few of the upbuilding elements that the additions to the farm capital gave to men of earlier generations. Future progress depends not on these older family standards, but on the new ideals that city life evokes. As a nation we advance or retrogress as the typical city environment calls forth or fails to call forth qualities in men that make them masters of their new situation.

City life is too complex to yield to the kind of analysis that a farming community offers. Farm after farm has similar conditions and in moving from one state to another the farming unit remained the same. In a survey of city life the attention is attracted by the misery of the poor or by the extravagance of the rich. Neither of these classes offers a good field for the study of city evolution. The poor are crushed by the weight of their misfortunes. The rich are too free from environmental control to have their standards set by local conditions. These extremes are after all abnormal. The mode lies between them and in it are tendencies easily interpreted if the striking peculiarities of the extremes are disregarded. The mode changes but little even when the extremes are fluctuating or moving in diverse directions. Only slow persistent changes make for evolution. Striking changes are usually of little moment because counteracted by equally marked changes in other directions.

To cut off the fluctuating extremes and to reveal the persistent changes in the social mode, I shall divide American families into three classes. In the first are those having an income of less than \$15 a week; in the second are those with incomes between \$15 and \$40 a week; and in the third families with an income of more than \$40 a week. The second of these family groups has the greater importance. The poor die out or are transformed into the class above. The rich hold to the traditions and social codes of the past. Their standards are usually a generation behind those of the groups with less income. The trend of events among city populations is more readily measurable among the two-story homes than in the slums or in the fashionable districts. The city mode shows itself here and can be contrasted with the older mode so long prevalent in farming regions.

In agricultural communities, the standards and ideals of the workers are set by the conditions of the land they use. No such standards are available for the city artisan. Productive capital being out of his control has little effect in shaping his conduct. Personal character, therefore, is not influenced by the forms that productive capital takes nor by its increase or decrease. The morality of the

town man is not an economic morality shaped by his productive enterprises. It is an emotional morality directed against the evils he dreads more than by the ends he hopes to attain. Morality is thus a state of freedom where character formation proceeds from the pressure of wants and not from the restraints of situation. Six negations express this emotional morality. It would be an overstatement to say that they are clearly seen and emotionally revolting to all city workers but it can be said that they stand forth as limitations to aggression.

No privilege  
No exploitation  
No graft  
No unearned income  
No servility  
No debts

Primitive morality has sharp definite prohibitions coupled with clearly defined motives of action. Each item in the moral code stands alone. It is either a positive prohibition or a positive command. There is in each case a right and a wrong with no intermediate. All this is changed by the transfer of population from country to city. The prohibitions are no longer absolute but conditioned by the income expended. Good things are only relatively good; bad things are only relatively bad. The good of one age thus becomes the bad of the next. The only workman without character is he who has but one want. As additional wants are injected, crude cravings are suppressed or transformed into demands that harmonize with the growing budgetary pressure. Every cheapening of commodities or increase of income thus adds to the pressure of wants and forces a character development to meet the situation. This view of social advance must be contrasted with the positive prohibitions and commands of the older morality. Primitive standards, dogmatic judgments and objective authority will break down before city life can be reorganized in a way that will evoke character.

We can observe these changes best in families where the fear of poverty has been removed by regular employment at a living wage. One way to measure them is through the father when he divides his income among the various items in the family budget. The other is

the manner in which the daughter uses her income when she earns wages to support herself or the family. I shall consider only the cases of homed girls whose earnings are supplementary to that of the father. While the homeless girl has to struggle harder and is deserving of more sympathy, her expenditures do not show the trend of progress in the way that the choices of the homed girl do. We may assume that the homeless girl would do what the homed girl does if the way were opened by more wages or by more favorable conditions. There is no visible mode for boys as there is for girls. They are either much better or much worse than their fathers. Most girls are a little taller, a little healthier and a little more courageous than their mothers. If they are not so, either the conditions or the mothers are to blame. Girls, therefore, furnish the best standard by which to test progress. By their persistent efforts the standards of each generation are set. Large changes are man made, but the slow evolution of families is due to each girl's determination to raise her family above its present level. Every two-story home has a heroine whose struggles for better things are the source of its uplift.

In such a family the father has three persistent motives; to have a home, to give his children a start in life, and to make improvements in the city or town in which he lives. A generation ago this third want would not have been keenly felt. He would then have put life insurance or provision for old age as the third element in his budget. The protection against city evils is no longer a family affair. The removal of misfortune, disease, inefficiency and even of irregular employment is now a national affair, against which families would struggle in vain. This gives to the vote an importance that it did not formerly have. A change of interest results that gives to preventive measures the place that provision for sickness or old age formerly had. To keep well and to earn money until sixty is a better guarantee of a secure old age than schemes that carry with them the danger of a breakdown at forty.

It is under conditions such as these that the father distributes his earnings. The net result is a free reliable man with plenty of coöperative security in the family and community of which he is a part. The risks he runs are minor as compared with those he has safeguarded himself against. His budget shapes itself as follows:

Assets		Liabilities	
Home.....	\$4,000	Mortgage on home .....	\$1,000
2 Shares in filtration plant...	200	Support of self and wife from	
2 Shares in heat and light		60 to 70 years of age .....	5,000
station.....	200		
5 Shares in municipal trans-			
portation .....	500		
1 Share in municipal hospital.	100		
4 Shares in high school.....	400		
Support of two girls in high			
school.....	2,600		
For boy while in school and			
college.....	4,000		
Total.....	\$12,000	Total .....	\$6,000

Such a standardization of family income is well under way in the residence sections of many cities. Thousands of two-story homes give identical problems to their occupants and force similar solutions. The budgets of these families look as nearly alike as the homes in which they live. Kitchen, bathroom, food, furniture and parlor ornaments get a similarity that is deadening viewed as a mass, but which to each family give the motive and arouse the energy by which it is built up. Equally apparent are the standards of the girls within these homes. To round out her budget each girl must cut down certain expenditures so as to expand in other directions. This is the measure of her moral progress.

I have tried to obtain data that would indicate in what direction this pressure is being exerted with results that may be of value if their limitations are regarded. Figures are given, not with the idea of reaching averages, but of getting at the mode towards which dress expenditures are tending. Girls were sought who have as full a control as possible of their income. What these girls do, I assume other girls would do if they earned the same money and spent it themselves. Their wages are between \$10 to \$15 a week, supplementary to a family income of from \$12 to \$20 a week. Most of them are high school graduates under twenty-five years of age. Of them, I asked four questions:

1. What did you pay for your best hat?
2. What did you pay for your best dress?
3. Do you regularly contribute to the expenses of your family?

## 4. Do you regularly save some of your earnings?

The answers in the first table are those of a group of Philadelphia office girls who control their own expenditures. I regard them as the best group I have found to indicate the direction of budgetary choices among self-supporting girls.

	Best hat	Best dress	Saving	Home contributors
1	\$10	\$13	Yes	Yes
2	10	25	Yes	Yes
3	12	25	No	Yes
4	25	60	Yes	Yes
5	7	25	Yes	Yes
6	10	30	Yes	Yes
7	7	15	Yes	No
8	40	50	No	No
9	10	30	Yes	No
10	10	25	Yes	Yes
11	10	25	Yes	Yes
12	6	20	No	No
Average....	\$13 <sup>1</sup>	\$28		

In contrast to this group I give the answers of a group of New York girls. They are children of recent immigrants who give up their income to their parents and get back in clothes and comforts such articles as the parents deem wise.

	Age	Salary	Best hat	Best dress
1	18	\$13	\$5	\$19
2	18	10	5	20
3	19	12	8	25
4	20	14	8	28
5	19	13	2.40	18
6	20	10	5	23
7	20	8	2.40	14
8	19	13	1	30
9	18	9	4	30
10	18	7	4	25
11	19	9	.50	16
12	19	10	7	10
Average....	19	\$11	\$4	\$20

<sup>1</sup>Includes price of plume.

The New York group if compared with the Philadelphia girls would show a marked difference in taste. Their dresses would be of poorer material, but highly ornamented with lace and braid. Between these two groups would come the Boston girls of the same class. My facts about them are meagre, but they indicate an expenditure of \$7 for hats and of \$18 for dresses. The better dressing of the Philadelphia girls is due to the warmer climate and to increased outdoor life. The nearness to Atlantic City with its attractive boardwalk is an element as is also the fact that Philadelphia girls throw increasing emphasis on their summer vacation.

It is a mistake to regard these changes merely in terms of income or of place. Back of them are changes in family standards, in ideal, in health and even in physique. A new woman is appearing who differs in many ways from her predecessor. She is stronger, more healthy, more ambitious, and with moral qualities that match the new vigor. Her predecessor was sensory in development, who thought of her clothes as an ornament and not as a tool through which the ends of womanhood are reached. With greater physical vigor and more ambition, women love activity and cut out the contrasts in color and design in which the primitive woman indulged. Motor tendencies also promote self-consciousness at the expense of the sex-consciousness. The man-made woman dresses to emphasize her sex; the self-conscious woman subordinates her clothing to the needs of her own personality and her activity. The limitations thus created can be expressed in five negatives:

- No contrasted colors
- No lace, or embroidery or braid
- No belt at waist
- No ornamental buttons
- No jewelry.

This is not meant to express any woman's rules, but to emphasize observed tendencies. Women become less conspicuous but more impressive as ready-made clothing is substituted for custom-made or home-made garments. As the dress is standardized, the hat becomes more individualized and rises in price in relation to other articles of apparel. A costly hat is not a sign of extravagance, but a mark of the standardization through which greater economies are attained. The older standards of dress are an inheritance from earlier epochs in which women made their own clothes from models subject to personal



inspection. Variety of color and intricacy of design were thus favored. Today standards are set not by the inspection of other women's dresses but by the pictures and advertisements. In the frontispieces of magazines, the face and hat are made emphatic, while the details of bodily form are absent. Advertisements emphasize the outlines of clothing, but not its contrasts. It is difficult to reproduce striking colors or intricate designs. A simpler ideal of dress is thus created and the center point of attention is transferred from the body of a woman to her face. This reduces the sex consciousness of both women and men.

This paper cannot deal fully with the artistic phases of woman's dress, but some of its elements are so important that they must be stated. Woman makes both a spiritual appeal and a sex appeal. The spiritual appeal is made through the expression of the face, while the sex appeal is augmented by bodily contrasts. Whatever thus features a woman's face, whether in art or in dress, gives her a spiritual impress. The face is made prominent through the blending of colors so that it gives the tone to the impression. The dress should also be simplified and striking colors, if used, must be put on the hat above the face. To create sex effects, the body is featured by contrasts of color or design. Each part gets an emphasis centering attention on it. The face losing its significance sinks into a mere surface. Unless thoroughly conventional and hence archaic, woman's dress tends towards one of these forms. The active, healthy woman creates a spiritual impress by simplifying her dress and thus enhancing her facial beauty. Her less advanced sister clings to the older dress forms through which a lower appeal is made. Out of the struggle is coming a new womanhood with higher morality and more beauty. Dressing is thus more than an economy: it is the essence of moral progress.

The change from sex consciousness to self consciousness thus gives to each element in a girl's expenditure a character value that can be compared and contrasted. Qualities are no longer absolute because set by men or social tradition; they are measured by the elevation they give or by the protection they afford. Put in budgetary form, the moral values of such a girl shape themselves as follows:

Assets	Liabilities
Health	4 years in high school.....\$800
Efficiency	1 year of vocational training..... 300
Moral courage	1 hat..... 10
Trustworthiness	1 gown..... 30
Neatness	
Attractiveness	
Promptness	
Cheerfulness	
Prudence	
Manners	

Each item of expenditure yields a return in moral qualities which give to its possessor more independence and greater income. A becoming hat creates additional income and leads to a more complete development of moral traits. Does an expensive gown add to the neatness, cheerfulness, prudence or other upbuilding tendencies in its possessor? If so, it has a moral as well as a pleasure value. A series of pressures have thus been created, each acting as a restraint on desires previously dominant. The primitive wants were for food. Expenditures of this sort are checked in city people by the desire to own their own homes. Then the growing desire for fine clothing forces homes and food to become plainer. A still higher group of wants are now showing themselves in the desire for vocational training. When girls desire to earn their own living and boys want to go to college, expenditures for clothing are checked and standardized in the same way that food and homes have been. Efficiency is more compelling than expenditure and its standards are more consciously moral.

In the past the family has been held together more by its emotional negations than by its economic advantages. The new situation makes moral those acts that help in the attaining of common ends rather than those that protect from evils. Emotion can wisely check action when the evils to be avoided are relatively simple; it cannot, however, give equally plain criteria for socialized conduct. Adjustive action is therefore determined by the pressure of economic wants. The weaker wants are curbed, the stronger are gratified. This creates new forces in consumption and leads to the acceptance of definite social standards. The family thus passes from an emotional

to an economic basis with the result that budgetary values displace the earlier emotional attitudes. The new morality is volitional instead of mandatory. The standard enforces itself by its advantages, not by its penalties. It is the woman more than the man; the girl more than the mother who feels the force of the limitations to income and thus brings her actions into harmony with the family welfare. Food, housing and clothing are simplified as the joy of doing displaces the pleasure of seeing. An evolution is thus encouraged, which in the end will motorize conduct far more completely than present facts indicate. We have just begun the changes that are to transform women from a sensory to a motor basis. The seeming dissolution of family ties is due to this transition and not to the fact that family life or the relation of the sexes will be less standardized than they were in the past. We can thus recognize a law of progress even if we cannot see its end. Volition will displace coercion, the motor will dominate the sensory, an enthusiasm for social ends will replace the moral restrictions that bind us to the past.